



Views from Cambrian and Edenvale

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, May 11, 2009

Last week I attended two more community budget meetings to hear feedback from residents in District 9 and District 2. The District 9 meeting was a bit different from previous sessions, as there was no slide presentation. Instead, it included an overview and discussion to go over paper handouts on the Proposed Operating Budget with City Management.

Not much was shared on the cost of providing services to residents but rather, attendees were told: "Here are the proposed cuts." Some factoids were thrown out, including the fact that it takes all of the city's property tax, sales tax and utility tax revenues to provide for public safety, which is 64 percent of the budget. District 9 had 25 attendees, and they had lots of questions regarding spending on one thing versus another.

The first volley by a couple of people was that Happy Hollow is a nice place but it is not as essential as public safety. Next was a tirade about our three public golf courses. One older gentleman yelled, "We subsidize Golf!?" Which led into a discussion about that golf was a luxury and not as important as libraries. A woman said she has played on these golf courses and that the green fees should be raised to cover the actual cost of providing golf to residents. Then they both wanted to know how many millions we owe on the bonds for the golf courses but the answer was not provided. I didn't have the heart to tell them that Los Lagos Golf Course alone was over budget...by about \$6.5 million. That's OK though, the general fund covered it!

The budget proposes giving money to the Mariachi Festival, and this struck a nerve in several people, but especially for one woman who said, "I am Jewish, so maybe you can give me money for a Jewish Festival?" The point from her and others was, why fund any ethnic festival or cultural activity? (In all fairness the city of San Jose has funded the Jewish Community Center in Los Gatos with HNVF funds.)

Freezing salaries got many head nods, but it was explained that is up to the unions and freezes cannot be done by fiat.

One lady thought public safety was a Catch 22. She said police are expensive, and if you have to cut library hours and parks to pay for police then eventually you will need more police, since kids might get into more trouble with less to do.

The notion of volunteers was brought up at both meetings and that every San Jose resident should contribute their labor doing something that the city can no longer do. At this point a city employee in the audience yelled out, "Yeah, we should have a volunteer fire department," only to be greeted with a not-so-friendly stares from an off-duty firefighter in the audience.

District 2 held their meeting Saturday morning with 19 attendees. The most interesting comment was from two residents who participated in the January Neighborhood Meeting at City Hall, where they played the budget game of deciding what to cut and where to raise revenue. They noted that they made no cuts to public safety and were shocked that public safety was being cut. However, a moment later, they said that in their budget game they raised sales tax a quarter-cent, which brought in \$35 million. Raising sales tax can only be approved with a citywide election and not by the Council.

Finally, my event last Monday night with the Concord Coalition and the showing of the I.O.U.S.A documentary turned out great. Nearly 200 residents attended the event and 75 percent had never been to City Hall. Now how many of them will return?

Here is your chance: Tuesday, May 12 at 7:05pm is a public hearing on the budget at City Hall Council Chambers. As always, you're invited to say your piece before the Council. Time to break away from the computer and get analog.

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